SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA

TATHĀGATAGARBHASŪTRA

Indian Title: **Ārya-Tathāgatagarbha-Nāma-Mahāyāna-Sūtra**

TibetanTitle: **The Holy Mahāyāna Sūtra called Tathāgatagarbha**

Translated by **Michael Zimmerman**

[Invocation]

Homage to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (Namaḥ Sarvabuddhabodhisattvebhyaḥ) !

[Setting]

At one time I heard the following: In the hot months ten years after [his] complete Awakening (Abhisaṃbuddha), the Exalted One (Bhagavat) was staying on the mountain Vulture Peak (Gṛdhrakūṭa) near Rājagṛha, in the Candanagarbha pavilion (kūṭāgāra) of Ratnacchattra palace (prāsāda), together with a great community of monks (bhikṣu sangha), fully a hundred thousand [in number]. The monks [were both] śrāvakas under training and [those] no [longer in] need of training; almost all [of them were] honorable ones (arhat) [whose] contaminations were stopped (kṣīṇāsrava), [who were] free of defilements (niṣkleśa), [who] had attained mastery (vaśībhūta), [with] completely liberated minds and insight (suvimuktacitta, suvimuktaprajña), of noble race (ājāneya), [powerful like] great elephants (mahānāga), [whose] duties were done (kṛtakṛtya), [whose] tasks were performed (kṛtakaraṇīya), [who had] laid down [their] burden (apahṛtabhāra), [who had] reached their own goal (anuprāptasvakārtha), [in whom all] the fetters to existence were eliminated (parikṣīṇabhavasaṃyojana), [whose] minds were completely liberated by perfect knowledge (samyagājñāsuvimuktacitta), and [who had] attained excellent supremacy in the control over the whole mind (sarvacetovaśiparama-pāramiprāpta).

[Enumeration of the monks]

[Among] the fully hundred thousand monks were the venerable (āyuṣmat) Mahākāśyapa, the venerable Uruvilvākāśyapa, the venerable Nadīkāśyapa, the venerable Gayākāśyapa, the venerable Mahākātyāyana, the venerable Mahā-kauṣṭḥila, the venerable Vakula, the venerable Revata, the venerable Subhūti, the venerable Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra, the venerable Vāgīśa, the venerable Śāriputra, the venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, the venerable Ājñātakauṇḍinya, the venerable Udāyin, the venerable Rāhula, the venerable Nanda, the venerable Upananda, the venerable Ānanda and others.

[Description of the Bodhisattvas]

Also accompanying him were Bodhisattva-mahāsattvas who had come together from various Buddha-fields (Buddhakṣetra)—as many as the sands of sixty Ganges Rivers (ṣaṣṭigaṅgānadīvālukāsama).

[They were] all of them [only] one lifetime away [from Perfect Awakening] (Ekajātipratibaddha) and had attained the [five] great supernatural faculties, the [ten] powers (bala) and the [four kinds of] self-assurance (vaiśāradya), [had] venerated many myriads (koṭīniyutaśatasahasra) of

Buddhas and had set in motion the Wheel of the Dharma [which] never regresses (Avaivartya-Dharmacakra-Pravartaka).

It happened that sentient beings of immeasurable, innumerable world systems (lokadhātu) attained non-regression in [their striving after] supreme and perfect Awakening (Anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi) from hearing their names only.

[Enumeration of the Bodhisattvas]

[Among them were] the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas Dharmamati, Siṃhamati, Vyāghramati, Arthamati, Ratnamati, *Pravaramati, Candraprabha, *Ratna-candraprabha, *Pūrṇacandraprabha, Mahāvikrāmin, *Aprameyavikrāmin, Anantavikrāmin, Trailokyavikrāmin, *Acalapadavikrāmin, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Avalokiteśvara, Gandhahastin, *Gandharati, *Gandharatiśrī, Śrīgarbha, Sūryagarbha, Ketu, Mahāketu, *Vimalaketu, *Anantaratnayaṣṭi,

*Tyaktaratnayaṣṭi, *Vimalaratnayaṣṭi, Prāmodyarāja, *Sadāpramudita, Ratnapāṇi, Gaganagañja, Meru, Sumeru, Mahāmeru, *Guṇaratnāloka, Dhāraṇīśvararāja, Dharaṇīṃdhara, *Sarvasattvaroganivartana, *Prāmodyamanas, *Khinnamanas, *Akhinna, *Jyotiṣkara, Candana, *īhavivarta(na), *Aprameyābhigarjitasvara, *Bodhi-samutthāpana, Amoghadarśin, Sarvadharmavaśavartin, the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Maitreya, Mañjuśrī as a young man (kumārabhūta) and other Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas, as many as the sands of sixty Ganges Rivers.

[Other participants]

Also accompanying [him] were an immeasurable [number of] divinities (deva), snake-gods, (tree) spirits, celestial musicians, demons, man-birds, man-horses, serpent-beings, human beings (manuṣya) and [further] non-human beings (amanuṣya).

Then, after the Exalted One had been surrounded (parivṛta) and honored (puraskṛta) by many hundreds of thousands of assemblies, [he] was honored, venerated, worshiped and revered by kings, chief ministers (mahāmātya), guild leaders (śreṣṭhin), noblemen (gṛhapati), ministers (amātya), citizens (naigama) and country folk (janapada).

[The manifestation of supernatural phenomena]

At that time, after having been served food, the Exalted One withdrew for meditation in that same Candanagarbha pavilion, whereupon through the power of the Buddha appeared myriads of lotuses [coming out] from the Candanagarbha pavilion, with myriads of petals, as large as the wheels of carts (śakaṭacakrapramāṇa), colorful and not [yet] open. The [lotuses] then rose into the sky, covered this whole (sarvāvat) buddha-field, and remained [there] like a jewel canopy (ratnavitāna).

In each calyx of the lotuses (padmagarbha) was seated, cross-legged (paryaṅka), the body of a Tathāgata, emitting hundreds of thousands of rays of light and visible everywhere. And all the lotuses were opened up in blossom.

[The fading of the lotuses]

Then, by the supernatural power (adhiṣṭhāna) of the Buddha all the petals of the lotuses, without exception, became dark, deep-black, putrid (durgandha) and disgusting, and no [longer] pleasing.

But in the calyxes of the lotuses the bodies of the Tathāgatas sitting cross-legged and emitting hundreds of thousands of rays of light were [still] visible everywhere. Further, this whole Buddha-field became filled with the [rays of light from] the bodies of the Tathāgatas sitting in the calyxes of the lotuses. This Buddha-field became extremely beautiful [during] that time. Then at that time the whole multitude of Bodhisattvas and the four assemblies were extremely astonished (āścaryaprāpta) and filled with pleasurable excitement (audbilya-prāpta).

[Doubts of the onlookers]

[But] after seeing that supernatural display (ṛddhyabhisaṃskāra) of the Exalted One, [they] became uncertain (saṃśayaprāpta) [and questioned themselves]:
"What is the reason that the petals of all these myriads of lotuses became so unsightly (durvarṇa), and that their stalks (nāla) too became unsightly, disgusting and not pleasing, whereas in the calyxes of the lotuses each body of the Tathāgatas is [still] sitting cross-legged, and in that [they] emit hundreds of thousands of rays of Light are visible everywhere as [something] extremely beautiful?"

Thereupon, [the Exalted One] motioned (nimitta) to the entire multitude of Bodhisattvas and the four assemblies who had become uncertain to come closer. At that time there was a [certain] Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva named Vajramati [who had also] gathered [with the others] in the Candanagarbha pavilion.

[Questions of the Bodhisattva Vajramati]

Then the Exalted One said to the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Vajramati:
"Son of good family (kulaputra), venture to question the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and Perfectly Awakened One, with reference to an exposition on the Dharma!"

At the Exalted One's permission, the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Vajramati, realizing that the world with [its] gods, humans and demons and all the Bodhisattvas and the four assemblies, were anxious with doubts, then asked him the following:
"Exalted One, what is the reason this entire world system is covered with these myriads of such unsightly and putrid lotuses, yet in their centers sit cross-legged bodies of Tathāgatas emitting hundreds of thousands of rays of light and visible everywhere, and now myriads of living beings, seeing the bodies of the Tathāgatas, raise their joined palms (kṛtāñjali) in homage?"

Then at that time the Bodhisattva Vajramati uttered these verses:

[0.1] “Myriads of Buddhas are seated motionless in the center of lotuses: [with] such supernatural powers (siddhi) you display [them]. Never before have I seen [anything like] this!”

[0.2] “The [sight] of the leaders (nāyaka) emitting thousands of rays of light, covering this entire Buddha-field [with their splendor, and] wonderfully displaying a facile mastery of the dharmas, [is] constantly beautiful.”

[0.3] “There, in the center of unsightly lotuses [with] disgusting petals and stalks, sit [Tathāgatas], as if they [had] the nature of a jewel (Ratnasvabhāva). Why have [you with your] supernatural powers (siddhi) created these [manifestations]?”

[0.4] “I see Buddhas equal in number to the sands of the Ganges River, [and] I see the exquisite (viśiṣṭa) [manifestations] of the [Tathāgata’s] supernatural powers. Never before have [I] witnessed such a miracle (vikurvita) like this one existing right now.”

[0.5] “[I] implore the Highest among Humans (dvipadottama), the Divine (deva), to teach. [I] implore [him] to explain the reason [for this miraculous display]. [I] implore [him] to speak [with] solicitude (anukampā) [in order to] benefit the world. [I] implore [him] to remove the doubts of all embodied [beings] (dehin).”

[Introduction to the first simile]
Then the Exalted One said to the whole multitude of Bodhisattvas, [including] the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Vajramati and others:
“Sons of good family, there is a sūtra of great extent (vaipulya) called Tathāgatagarbha. In order to teach it the Tathāgata has produced these signs [which] appeared [to you]. Listen therefore closely, be attentive, and [I] will teach [you].”

“Just so!” replied the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Vajramati and the whole multitude of Bodhisattvas to the Exalted One, thereby acquiescing, and the Exalted One spoke:

“Sons of good family, just as these unsightly, putrid, disgusting and no [longer] pleasing lotuses, supernaturally created by the Tathāgata, and the pleasing and beautiful form of a Tathāgata sitting cross-legged in [each of] the calyxes of these lotuses, emitting hundreds of thousands of rays of light, [are such that when they are] recognized by gods and humans, [these latter] then pay homage and also show reverence [to them], in the same way, sons of good family, also the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and Perfectly Awakened One, [perceives] with his insight (prajñā), knowledge (Jñāna) and Tathāgata-vision that all the various sentient beings are encased in myriads of defilements, [such as] desire (rāga), anger (dveṣa), misguidedness (moha), longing (tṛṣṇā) and ignorance (avidyā).

And, sons of good family, [he] perceives that inside sentient beings encased in defilements sit many Tathāgatas, cross-legged and motionless, endowed like myself with a [Tathāgata’s] knowledge and vision.

And [the Tathāgata], having perceived inside those [sentient beings] defiled by all defilements the true nature of a Tathāgata (tathāgatadharmatā) motionless and unaffected by any of the states of existence, then says: 'Those Tathāgatas are just like me!'
Sons of good family, in this way a Tathāgata's vision is admirable, [because] with it [he] perceives that all sentient beings contain a Tathāgata (Tathāgatagarbha)."

[The simile of a Tathāgata in a lotus]

"Sons of good family, it is like the example of a person endowed with divine vision [who] would [use this] divine vision to look at such unsightly and putrid lotuses, not blooming and not open, and would [owing to his vision] recognize that there are Tathāgatas sitting cross-legged in their center, in the calyx of [each] lotus, and [knowing that, he] would then desire to look at the forms of the Tathāgatas; [he would] then peel away and remove the unsightly, putrid and disgusting lotus petals in order to thoroughly clean the forms of the Tathāgatas.

In the same way, sons of good family, with the vision of a Buddha, the Tathāgata also perceives that all sentient beings contain a Tathāgata (Tathāgatagarbha), and [therefore] teaches the Dharma [to them] in order to peel away the sheaths of those sentient beings [encased in such] defilements [as] desire, anger, misguidedness, longing and ignorance. And after [those sentient beings] have realized the [Dharma, their] Tathāgatas [inside] are established in the perfection [of the Tathāgatas]."

"Sons of good family, the essential law (Dharmatā) of the dharmas is this: whether or not Tathāgatas appear in the world, all these sentient beings at all times contain a Tathāgata (Tathāgatagarbha).

Sons of good family, in view of [this fact and] because [sentient beings] are encased in the disgusting sheaths of defilements, the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and Perfectly Awakened One, teaches the Dharma to Bodhisattvas and also leads [them] to put faith in this [revelatory] activity in order to destroy their sheaths of defilements and [thereby] also completely purify the Tathāgata-knowledge (Tathāgatajñāna) [contained within]. When (yadā) in this [connection] the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas [who] assiduously apply [themselves] (abhiyujyate) to these Dharmas have completely become free from all defilements and impurities, then (tadā) [they] will be designated 'Tathāgata, honorable one and perfectly awakened one,' and [they] will also perform all the tasks of a Tathāgata."

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[1.1] "It is as if [there were] a disgusting lotus whose [unsightly] sheath-[like] petals were not opened out, yet [whose] inside [containing a] Tathāgata, were unpolluted [by the petals], and a person with divine vision perceived [this]."

[1.2] "If this [person] peeled away its petals, in the center the body of a Victorious One would appear, and no impurity would then arise any longer [from this] Victorious One. He would appear as a Victorious One [in] the whole world."

[1.3] “In the same way, I also see bodies of Victorious Ones placed in the midst of all living beings, encased in myriads of defilements [that are] just like the disgusting sheaths of a lotus.”

[1.4] “[And] because I also desire to remove [the defilements] of those [sentient beings, I] am continually teaching the Dharma to the wise, thinking, ‘May these sentient beings become awakened!’ [And I] purify [their] defilements, so that [they may become] Victorious Ones.”

[1.5] “My Buddha-vision is like that [person’s divine vision]: with the [vision of a Buddha I] see that in all these sentient beings the body of a Victorious One is established, and in order to purify them [I] preach the Dharma.”

[The simile of honey shielded by bees]

“Sons of good family, again it is as if there were, for example, a round honeycomb hanging from the branch of a tree, shielded on all sides by a hundred thousand bees and filled with honey. And a person desiring honey, [and knowing of the honey within,] would then with skill [in the application of appropriate] means expel all the living beings, the bees, and then use the honey [in the way] honey is to be used.

In the same way, sons of good family, all sentient beings without exception are like a honeycomb: with a Tathāgata’s mental vision [I] realize that [their] Buddhahood within is ‘shielded on all sides’ by myriads of defilements and impurities.

Sons of good family, just as a skillful person by [his] knowledge realizes that there is honey inside a honeycomb shielded on all sides by myriads of bees, in the same way [I] realize with [my] Tathāgata’s mental vision that Buddhahood is without exception ‘shielded on all sides’ in all sentient beings by myriads of defilements and impurities.”

“And, sons of good family, just like the [person who] removed the bees, also the Tathāgata, with skill in [the application of appropriate] means (upāyakuśala), removes sentient beings’ defilements and impurities [from their Buddhahood] within, [such as] desire (rāga), anger (dveṣa), misguidedness (moha), pride (māna), insolence (mada), jealous disparagement (mrakṣa), rage (krodha), malice (vyāpāda), envy (īrṣyā), avarice (mātsarya), and so on. [He] then teaches the Dharma in such a way so that those sentient beings will not again become polluted and harmed by the defilements and impurities.

[When their] Tathāgata’s mental vision has become purified, [they] will perform the tasks of a Tathāgata in the world. Sons of good family, this is how I see all sentient beings with my completely pure vision of a Tathāgata.”

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[2.1] “It is as if there were a honeycomb here, shielded on all sides and hidden by bees, [but] a person desiring honey would perceive the [honey within] and expel the bees.”

[2.2] “Also here in the same way, all sentient beings [in] the triple states of existence are like the honeycomb. The many myriads of defilements are [like] the [bees, yet I] see that inside the defilements there exists a Tathāgata.”

[2.3] “Also, in order to clean [this] Buddha, I remove the defilements, even as [the person desiring honey] expels the bees. [Using appropriate] means, [I] teach here dharmas so that myriads of defilements will be eradicated.”

[2.4] “[I do this] in order to induce those [sentient beings], after becoming Tathāgatas, to continually perform the tasks [of a Tathāgata] throughout the world, and with readiness in speech to teach the Dharma, [which is] like a pot of honey from bees.”

[The simile of kernels enclosed by husks]

“Sons of good family, again it is like the example of winter rice, barley, millet or monsoon rice [whose] kernel (sāra) is shielded all around by a husk (tuṣa): as long as the [kernel] has not come out of its husk, [it can]not serve the function of solid, soft and delicious food. But, sons of good family, [it can serve this function very well once] some men or women, desiring that [these grains serve their] function as food and drink in hard, soft or other [forms], after having it reaped and threshed, remove the [coarse] sheath of the husk and the [fine] outer skin.”

“Sons of good family, in the same way [that people are aware of the precious kernel within the husk, so] too the Tathāgata perceives with [his] Tathāgata-vision that Tathāgatahood, Buddhahood, Svayaṃbhūtva—wrapped in the skin of the sheaths of defilements—is [always] present in every sentient being. Sons of good family, the Tathāgata also removes the skin of the sheaths of defilements, purifies the Tathāgatahood in them and teaches the Dharma to sentient beings, thinking:

‘How [can] these sentient beings become free from all the skins of the sheaths of defilements [so that they] will be designated in the world as ‘Tathāgata, honorable one and perfectly awakened one’?’”

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[3.1] “[It is] like monsoon rice or winter rice, or [like] millet or barley, [which,] as long as they are in the husk, cannot serve [their] function.”

[3.2] “[But] having been pounded [and their] husks having been removed, they [can] serve all [their] various functions. [However,] the kernels in the husks cannot serve [any] function for sentient beings.”

[3.3] “In the same way [that people are aware of the precious kernel within the husk,] I see that the ground of Buddhahood of all sentient beings is covered by defilements. And then I teach the Dharma in order to purify them and let [them] attain Buddhahood quickly.”

[3.4] “In order that [they] may quickly become victorious ones, [I] teach the Dharma so that, like mine, [their] true nature (Dharmatā), which, [though] wrapped in hundreds of defilements, is in all sentient beings, becomes purified [in] all [of them].”

[The simile of a gold nugget in excrement]

“Sons of good family, again it is like the example of a round nugget (piṇḍa) of gold [belonging to] someone (puruṣāntara) [who] had walked [along] a narrow path, [and whose nugget] had fallen into a place of decaying substances and filth, [a place] full of putrid excrement. In that place of decaying substances and filth full of putrid excrement, the [gold nugget], having been ‘overpowered’ by various impure substances, would have become invisible, [and would have remained] there for ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred or a thousand years, [but it would, though surrounded] by impure substances, [never be affected by them, owing to] its imperishable nature (avināśadharmin). [Because of the covering of impure substances, however, it could] not be of use to any sentient being.”

“Sons of good family, [if] then a divinity with divine vision looked at that round gold nugget, [the divinity] would direct a person:

‘O man, go and clean that gold of excellent value [t]here, [which is only externally] covered with all sorts (-jāta) of decaying substances and filth, and use the gold [in the way] gold is to be used!’

In [this simile], sons of good family, [what] is called ‘all sorts of decaying substances and filth’ is a designation for the different kinds of defilements. [What] is called ‘gold nugget’ is a designation for [what] is not subject to perishability (avināśadharmin) [, i.e., the true nature of living beings]. [What] is called ‘divinity [with] divine vision’ is a designation for the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and Perfectly Awakened One.

Sons of good family, in the same way also the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and Perfectly Awakened One, teaches the Dharma to sentient beings in order to remove the defilements—[which are like] all sorts of decaying substances and mud—[from] the imperishable true nature (Dharmatā) of a Tathāgata found in all sentient beings.”

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[4.1] “It is just like [the example of some] man’s nugget of gold [that] has fallen into all sorts of filth: though it remained there in such a state for not a few years, [yet it would never be affected owing to its] imperishable nature.”

[4.2] “[And] a divinity perceiving it with divine vision, in order to clean [it], would tell somebody: ‘Here is gold of excellent value! Clean [it] and use it [in the way gold] is to be used!’”

[4.3] "In the same way I [can] see that also all sentient beings have for a long time been constantly overpowered by defilements, [but] knowing that their defilements [are only] accidental (āgantuka), [I] teach the Dharma with [appropriate] means in order to purify [their] intrinsic nature (prakṛti)."

[The simile of a hidden treasure beneath the house of some poor person]

"Sons of good family, again it is as if in the earth beneath a storeroom in the house of some poor person, under a covering of earth seven fathoms (puruṣa) deep there were a great treasure, full of money and gold, [of the same] volume as the storeroom. But the great treasure—not being, of course, a sentient being, given [its lack of] a mental essence—[could] not say to the poor [man]: 'O man, I am a great treasure, but [I am] buried [here], covered under earth.'

[In his] mind the poor man, the owner of the house, would consider [himself] poor, and even though [he] walked up and down directly above the [treasure], he [could] not hear of, know of, or perceive the existence of the great treasure beneath the earth.

Sons of good family, in the same way, [in] all sentient beings, beneath their thinking, [which is based on] clinging (abhiniveśamanasikāra), and analogously to the house, there is [also] a great treasure, [namely] the treasury of the essence of a Tathāgata (Tathāgatagarbha), [including the ten] powers ([daśa] balāni), [the four kinds of] self-assurance ([catvāri] vaiśāradyāni), [the eighteen] specific [qualities of a Buddha] ([aṣṭādaśa-] āveṇika[-Buddhadharmāḥ]), and all [other] qualities of a Buddha.

And yet sentient beings cling to color and shape (rūpa), sound (śabda), odor (gandha), flavor (rasa) and tangible objects (spraṣṭavya), and therefore wander in saṃsāra, [caught in] suffering (duḥkhena). And as a result of not having heard of that great treasure of [Buddha] qualities [within themselves, they] in no way apply [themselves] to taking possession [of it] and to purifying [it]."

"Sons of good family, then the Tathāgata appears in the world and manifests (saṃprakāśayati) a great treasure of such [Buddha] qualities among the Bodhisattvas. The [Bodhisattvas] then acquire confidence in that great treasure of [Buddha] qualities and dig [it] out.

Therefore in the world [they] are known as 'Tathāgatas, honorable ones and perfectly Awakened Ones,' because having become [themselves] like a great treasure of [Buddha] qualities, [they] teach sentient beings the aspects of [this] unprecedented argument [of Buddhahood in all of them] (apūrvahetvākāra), similes [illustrating this matter], reasons for actions, and [tasks] to fulfill.

[They] are donors (dānapati) [who give from] the storeroom of the great treasure, and having unhindered readiness of speech (asaṅgapratibhānavat), [they are] a treasury of the many qualities of a Buddha, including the [ten] powers and the [four kinds of] self-assurance.

Sons of good family, in this way, with the completely pure vision of a Tathāgata, the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and Perfectly Awakened One, also perceives that all sentient beings are like the [poor owner of the house with the hidden treasure] and then teaches the Dharma to the Bodhisattvas in order to clean the treasury [in all sentient beings, which contains such qualities as] the Tathāgata-knowledge, the [ten] powers, the [four kinds of] self-assurance and the [eighteen] specific qualities of a Buddha."

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[5.1] "[It is] as if beneath the house of a poor [man] there was a treasure full of gold and money, in which neither motion nor thinking was existent and [which could] not say: 'I am yours!'"

[5.2] "At the same time a sentient being, the owner of the house, had become poor. But because [he] would not know [of the treasure] and [because] there was nobody [who] had informed him, the poor [man] would remain above the [treasure without digging it out]."

[5.3] "In the same way, with the vision of a Buddha I see that in all sentient beings—though [from the outside] they resemble poor [men] —there is a great treasure; and [I see this treasure] as the motionless body of a Sugata."

[5.4] "I see that [treasure and] teach [the following] to the Bodhisattvas:
'O you [bodhisattvas], take the treasury of my knowledge! Act [so that you may] become treasures of the supreme Dharma, being free of poverty and becoming protectors of the world (Lokanātha)!'"

[5.5] "Whoever acquires confidence in [this] my teaching—in each of those sentient beings is a treasure. Whoever, having acquired confidence, exerts himself will quickly attain excellent Awakening."

[The simile of a sprout in the seed]

"Sons of good family, again it is like the example of a fruit of a mango tree, a rose apple tree, a palmyra palm or of cane: inside the sheaths of the outer peel there is a seed of imperishable nature (*avināśadharmin) [containing] a sprout, [a seed] which, thrown on soil, will become a great king of trees.

Sons of good family, in the same way also the Tathāgata perceives that [sentient beings who are] dwelling in the world are completely wrapped in the sheaths of the outer peel of [such] defilements [as] desire (rāga), anger (dveṣa), misguidedness (moha), longing (tr̥ṣṇā) and ignorance (avidyā)."

"In this [connection] the true nature (Dharmatā) of a Tathāgata, being in the womb (garbha) inside the sheaths of [such] defilements [as] desire, anger, misguidedness, longing and ignorance, is designated 'sattva.'

When it has become cool, it is extinct (nirvṛta). And because [it is then] completely purified [from] the sheaths of defilements of ignorance, [it] becomes a great accumulation of knowledge [in the] realm of sentient beings (sattvadhātu). The world with [its] gods (sadevako lokaḥ), having perceived that supreme, great accumulation of knowledge [in the] realm of sentient beings speaking like a Tathāgata, recognizes [him] as a Tathāgata.

Sons of good family, in this [connection] the Tathāgata perceives that [all sentient beings] are like the [seed containing a sprout], and then propounds the matter to the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas in order that [they] might realize the Tathāgata-knowledge [within themselves].”

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[6.1] “Just as all the fruits of cane have a cane sprout inside [their seeds], and [just as a sprout] is also in all the [fruits of] palmyra palms and rose apple trees: when the result, [which is already perfectly] contained within [the fruit’s outer peel,] is made to germinate, [a great tree will] grow.”

[6.2] “In the same way also the Master of the Dharma, the Leader, perceives with the supreme, uncontaminated vision of a Buddha that in all sentient beings without exception—similarly to the cane seed—there is the body of a Sugata.”

[6.3] “The [being in the state when] the sheaths [of defilements] have not been destroyed is called ‘sattva.’ Even though [the essence of this sattva, namely the body of a Sugata,] dwells [hidden] in ignorance, there is no illusory imagining (manyanā). [It] dwells in absorption (Samādhi), is completely calm and there is no motion whatsoever.”

[6.4] “Thinking:
‘How may these sentient beings become awakened—just as a great tree has grown from a seed—and [thus become] refuges (śaraṇa) for the world with [its] gods?’ I speak the Dharma in order to completely purify [sentient beings].”

[The simile of a Tathāgata image wrapped in rotten rags]

“Sons of good family, again it is like the example of a poor man [who] has a Tathāgata image the size of the palm of a hand [and] made of seven kinds of jewels. It then so happened that the poor man wished to cross a [dangerous] wilderness carrying the Tathāgata image [with him]. And in order that it might not be discovered by anybody else, or stolen by robbers, he then wrapped it in some rotten, putrid rags.

Then the man died owing to some calamity in that same wilderness, and his Tathāgata image, made of jewels [and] wrapped in rotten rags, then lay around on the footpath. [But] travelers, unaware [of the precious Tathāgata image in the rags], repeatedly stepped over [it] and passed by. And [they would] even point [at it] as something disgusting [and question]: ‘Where has the wind brought this wrapped bundle of rotten, putrid rags from?’

And a divinity dwelling in the wilderness, having looked [at the situation] with divine vision, would show [it to] some people and direct [them]:
‘O men, [here] inside this bundle of rags is a Tathāgata image made of jewels, worthy to be paid homage by all worlds. So [you] should open [it]!’”

“Sons of good family, in the same way also the Tathāgata perceives that all sentient beings are wrapped in the wrappings of defilements and that [they are like something] disgusting, wandering around for ages throughout the wilderness of saṃsāra. And, sons of good family, [the Tathāgata] perceives that also within sentient beings [who] are wrapped in the wrappings of various defilements—and even though [they] may have come into existence as animals—there is the body of a Tathāgata of the same [kind] as my own.

Sons of good family, ‘How does the mental vision of a Tathāgata (Tathāgatajñānadarśana) [in all sentient beings] become free and completely purified from impurities so that [sentient beings] become worthy of the homage of all worlds, as I am now?’

Thus thinking, the Tathāgata teaches in this [connection] the Dharma to all Bodhisattvas in order to cause [such beings] to become free from the wrappings of defilements [in which they] are wrapped.”

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[7.1] “It is as if a Sugata image were wrapped in putrid, disgusting [materials]—made of jewels [and yet] wrapped in rags—[and] had been left on a path and lay around [there].”

[7.2] “And the divinity, having perceived it with divine vision, had said to some [people]:
‘Here is a tathāgata [image made of] jewels. Open quickly this bundle of rags!’”

[7.3] “My [vision] is like this divinity’s vision: with that [vision I] see that without exception all these sentient beings, wrapped in the wrappings of defilements, are suffering severely [and] are continuously tormented by [this] suffering of saṃsāra.”

[7.4] “I perceive that inside the wrappings [consisting of] defilements the body of a victorious one is firmly established, that that [body] is without motion and change, and that yet there is nobody setting that [body] free.”

[7.5] “Having seen [this], I then urged [the Bodhisattvas]:
‘[O you] who have entered excellent Awakening, listen! Thus [is] the essential law (Dharmatā) [regarding] sentient beings: here [within each sentient being] always dwells a victorious one, wrapped around [with defilements].’”

[7.6] "'When the Sugata-knowledge [within] has been set free and all defilements are pacified, then this [sentient being] is called 'Awakened' (Buddha) and the hearts of gods and humans are full of joy.'"

[The simile of the future universal emperor in the womb of a poor, depressed woman]

"Sons of good family, again it is like the example of a woman without a protector (anāthabhūta), of unsightly complexion, having a bad smell, disgusting, frightening, ugly and like a demoness (piśācī), [and this woman] had taken up residence in a poorhouse. While staying there she had become pregnant. And though the life that had entered into her womb was such as to be destined to reign as a world emperor, the woman would neither question herself with reference to the sentient being existing in her womb 'Of what kind is this life [that] has entered my womb?', nor would she [even] question herself in that [situation]: 'Has [some life] entered my womb or not?' Rather, thinking herself poor, [she would be] depressed, [and] would think thoughts [like] '[I am] inferior and weak,' and would pass the time staying in the poorhouse as somebody of unsightly complexion and bad smell."

"Sons of good family, in the same way also all sentient beings [think of themselves as] unprotected and are tormented by the suffering of saṃsāra. [They, too,] stay in a poorhouse: the places of [re]birth in the states of being. Then, though the element of a Tathāgata has entered into sentient beings and is present within, those sentient beings do not realize it !

Sons of good family, in order that sentient beings do not despise themselves, the Tathāgata in this [connection] teaches the Dharma with the [following] words:

'Sons of good family, apply energy without giving in to despondency! It will happen that one day the Tathāgata [who has] entered [and] is present within you will become manifest. Then you will be designated 'Bodhisattva,' rather than '[ordinary] sentient being (sattva).' [And] again in the [next stage you] will be designated 'Buddha,' rather than 'Bodhisattva'.'"

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[8.1] "It is as if a simple (bāla) woman without a protector, of bad complexion and ugly disposition would [go to] stay in a poorhouse, [and] after a time would there have become pregnant,"

[8.2] "[and yet] the [life] that had entered her womb would be such that the [embryo] was destined [to become] a world emperor king, elevated by [his] magnanimity (Mahātmatā) [and his seven] jewels, and ruling [over all] four continents."

[8.3] "[But] that simple woman would [behave] like this: [she] would not know if [some life] had entered [her] womb, rather [she] would [continue to] stay in the poorhouse and pass the time in the belief that [she] was poor."

[8.4] “In the same way, I see that all sentient beings also [think of themselves as] unprotected and are distressed by dharmas, [which lead to] suffering, remaining [caught up] in the lesser pleasures of the three spheres, [even though] inside [them] there is the true nature (Dharmatā), like [the world emperor in] the womb [of the woman].”

[8.5] “Having seen thus [I] taught the Bodhisattvas:
‘As all sentient beings do not know about the true nature (Dharmatā) within [their own] wombs [which] grants benefit [to] the world, [take care of them and let them] not consider themselves inferior!’”

[8.6] “‘Apply energy (vīrya) firmly! Soon you yourselves will become Victorious Ones. At some point [you will] attain the essence of Awakening. Then [you] will proceed to liberate myriads of living beings !’”

[The simile of golden figures within burned clay molds]

“Sons of good family, again it is like the example of figures of horses, elephants, women or men being fashioned out of wax, then encased in clay [so that they are completely] covered [with it and finally, after the clay has dried,] melted [in fire]; and after [the wax] has been made to drip out, gold is melted. And when [the cavity inside the mold] is filled with the melted [gold], even though all the figures, having cooled down step by step (krameṇa) [and] arrived at a uniform state, are [covered with] black clay and unsightly outside, [their] insides are made of gold. Then, when a smith or a smith’s apprentice [uses] a hammer [to] remove from the [figures] the outer [layer of] clay [around] those figures which he sees have cooled down, then in that moment the golden figures lying inside become completely clean.”

“Sons of good family, likewise also the Tathāgata perceives with the vision of a Tathāgata that all sentient beings are like figures [in] clay: the cavity inside the sheaths of outer defilements and impurities is filled with the qualities of a Buddha [and with] the precious uncontaminated knowledge (anāsrava-jñāna); inside, a Tathāgata exists in [all] magnificence.

Sons of good family, having then perceived that all sentient beings are like this, the Tathāgata goes among the Bodhisattvas and perfectly teaches [them] these [nine] Dharma discourses of that kind[, i.e., on the Tathāgata-knowledge within all sentient beings]. [Using] the Vajra[-like] hammer of the Dharma, the Tathāgata then hews away all outer defilements in order to entirely purify the precious Tathāgata-knowledge of those Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas who have become calm and cool.

Sons of good family, what is called ‘smith’ is a designation for the Tathāgata. Sons of good family, after the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and Perfectly Awakened One, has perceived with [his] Buddha-vision that all sentient beings are like this, [he] teaches the Dharma in order to establish [them] in Buddha-knowledge, having let [them] become free from the defilements.”

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[9.1] “It is like [the example of casting golden images: first, wax] figures are covered outside with clay; [then, after the wax has been melted and so drips out,] the inside [of the clay] has a cavity and is empty; [finally,] when [these cavities] are filled with precious melted materials, [they] turn into many hundreds of thousands [of golden figures].”[

9.2] “[Then] a smith, realizing that [the figures in the clay] have thoroughly cooled down, hews away the coverings of clay around the figures, thinking:
‘What can [I] do so that (yathā) these [black molds with their insides] made of precious materials may turn into clean figures?’”

[9.3] “In the same way I see that all sentient beings, without exception, are like golden figures covered with clay: [their] outside crusts are the sheaths of defilements, but inside there is the Buddha-knowledge (Buddhajñāna).”

[9.4] “[Using] the tool of the Dharma, [the Tathāgata] then hews away the [defilements of those] Bodhisattvas who have become calm and cool, so that (yena) their defilements are expelled without any remainder.”

[9.5] “[Living beings’ internal] child of a Victorious One who has become clean in this [world are] just like the beautiful precious figures: [their] bodies are filled with the ten powers [of a Buddha], and [they] are venerated here [by] the world with [its] gods.”

[9.6] “Thus I see all living beings; thus I see also the Bodhisattvas. Thus purified [by the Tathāgata they] become Sugatas. [Having become] pure Sugatas, [they] then teach the rule (netrī) of the Buddhas.”

[Merit from propagating the TGS - Tathāgatagarbhasūtra]

Then the Exalted One said to the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Vajramati:
“Vajramati, sons and daughters of good family, whoever, whether a layman (gṛhin) or ordained (pravrajita), learns (udgṛhṇāti) this Dharma discourse (Dharmaparyāya) called Tathāgatagarbha, preserves [it] (dhārayati), recites [it] (vācayati), understands [it] (paryavāpnoti), arranges [it] into a book, explains [it] (deśayati) also to others in detail and teaches [it] (saṃprakāśayati), will produce much merit (puṇyaṃ prasavati).”

[Devaluation of external worship]

“Vajramati, a certain Bodhisattva might apply [himself] to realize the Tathāgata-knowledge, and for the purpose of venerating all Buddhas without exception in every single world system (lokadhātu), [he] would, after achieving supernatural powers (ṛddhi), attain (samāpadyate) such an absorption (Samādhi) that through the power created by [this] absorption [he could] day by day present (niryātayati) pavilions to every single existing Tathāgata among the Buddhas, the exalted ones, even more [numerous] than the sands of the Ganges River, in myriads

(koṭīniyutaśatasahasra) of Buddha-fields even more [numerous] than the sands of the Ganges River, together with [their] Bodhisattvas and the communities of śrāvakas.

[To reside in these pavilions would be] pleasant in [every] season. [Their] width [and length would each be] one yojana (apprx.14 kilometeres) [their] height ten yojanas. [They] would be made of all [kinds of] jewels, [and would be] heavenly fragrant, being strewn with a variety of fallen blossoms and furnished with all immaculate (anavadya) objects of enjoyment (bhoga).

[The number of pavilions would be] as many as fifty [times] the sands of a hundred thousand Ganges Rivers. For fully a hundred thousand cosmic cycles (kalpas) [he] would show reverence in this way.

If [on the contrary] a certain son or daughter of good family should forge the resolution (citta) to [strive for] Awakening (Bodhi), and internalize or arrange into a book (pustaka) only one simile from this Dharma discourse [called] Tathāgatagarbha, [then], Vajramati, the previously [described Bodhisattva's] accumulation of merit does not come near, by even a hundredth, a thousandth, a hundred thousandth—any number, any tiny part (kalā), any calculation or any resemblance—to his accumulation of merit (puṇyābhisaṃskāra); nor does [it] bear any comparison."

[Superiority of joyful approval of the TGS - Tathāgatagarbhasūtra]

"Then, Vajramati, [suppose] a Bodhisattva, in searching (paryeṣate) for the Dharma of the Buddhas, strewed four hundred thousand triple-bushels of flowers of the coral (mandāra) tree for every single Tathāgata among the Buddhas, the Exalted Ones, for fully a hundred thousand cosmic cycles.

Vajramati, if [on the contrary] any monk, nun, upāsaka or upāsikā should decide [to strive] for awakening, and after listening to this Dharma discourse [called] Tathāgatagarbha raised [their] joined palms and said [just] the single phrase 'I joyfully approve [what I have heard]!' (anumodayāmi), [then] Vajramati, the previously [described Bodhisattva's] accumulations of merit and benefit, connected with the offering of flowers and flower garlands, planted among the Tathāgatas [as fields of merit (puṇyakṣetra)], do not come near by even a hundredth, a thousandth, a hundred thousandth—any number, any tiny part, any calculation or any resemblance—to those accumulations of merit and benefit; nor do [they] bear any comparison."

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[10.1] "[Suppose], having brought forth the wish for awakening, a certain sentient being listened to this [discourse and] learned [it], copied [it] or arranged [it] into a book and explained [even just] a single verse with appreciation (sagaurava);"

[10.2] “or if after listening to this Tathāgatagarbha[sūtra] somebody searched for this excellent awakening: listen to [my description of] the benefit (anuśaṃsā) [accruing] to him in these cases—[a description of] what amount of merit is produced!”

[10.3] “[Suppose] a hero (vīra) abiding in these excellent supernatural powers worshiped for a thousand cosmic cycles the highest of humans (narottama) and [their] śrāvakas in the ten directions.”

[10.4] “[He] would present to each teacher (ācārya) of the world without exception excellent palaces (vimānaśreṣṭha) made of jewels—in number several myriad [times the sands of] the Ganges [and] more, unimaginably (acintya) many.”

[10.5] “The [palaces] would be ten yojanas high and one yojana wide and long, be excellently furnished with fragrances and incense, and inside be provided with thrones made of jewels.”

[10.6] “[These] thrones, and palanquins too, [would be] spread with silk and calico a hundred [times], as innumerable as [the sands of the] Ganges River; [he] would present [these palaces with thrones] to each victorious one.”

[10.7] “Upon the victorious ones who reside in world systems—those victorious ones more [numerous] than the sands of the Ganges River—[he] would thus bestow [these palaces, and] would venerate [them] all with appreciation.”

[10.8] “If [on the contrary] some wise [person], having listened to this sūtra, learns only one single simile correctly, or having learnt [it], explains [it] to somebody [else, then] he will [produce] a greater amount of merit thereby [than the previous person].”

[10.9] “Regarding the [former] merit seized by the hero [who worshiped the Tathāgatas, it] does not come near by any tiny part or resemblance [to the merit of this wise person]. [The wise person therefore] becomes a refuge (śaraṇa) for all living beings, and he quickly attains excellent awakening.”

[10.10] “The wise Bodhisattva who reflects upon [the following]:
‘The Tathāgatagarbha exists in the same way [in all beings]! This is the true nature - Dharmatā of all sentient beings,’ will quickly become an Awakened One through his own power (svayaṃbhū).”

[The story of Sadāpramuktaraśmi and Anantaraśmi]

[The appearance of Tathāgata Sadāpramuktaraśmi]

“Vajramati, again, by way of this [following] kind [of exposition] (paryāya), [one] should know thus: namely, that this Dharma discourse is extremely beneficial (bahukara) for Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas [because it] will lead to the realization of the knowledge of an Omniscient One (Sarvajñajñāna).

Vajramati, formerly, in the past, innumerable, vast, measureless, unimaginable, unparalleled and [quantitatively] inexpressible cosmic cycles [ago], [and] even more beyond the other side of that [time]—then, at that time—there appeared in the world the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and perfectly Awakened One, named Sadāpramuktaraśmi, realized in wisdom and conduct, a Sugata, a World-knowing One, a Charioteer of human beings to be tamed, unsurpassable, a Teacher of gods and men, a Buddha, an Exalted One."

[The Light from the Bodhisattva fills the world systems]

"Vajramati, why is that Tathāgata called Sadāpramuktaraśmi? Vajramati, immediately after the exalted one, the Tathāgata Sadāpramuktaraśmi, then a Bodhisattva, had entered the womb of [his] Mother, light was emitted from [his] body, while [he was still] within the womb of his Mother, [so that] in the east hundreds of thousands of world systems, as many as the atomic-sized dust of ten Buddha-fields, came to be constantly filled with brightness.

In the same way, in the [other nine of the] ten directions, [namely] the south, the west, the north, the southeast, southwest, northwest and northeast, along with the nadir and the zenith, hundreds of thousands of world systems, as many as the atomic-sized dust of ten Buddha-fields, came to be constantly filled with brightness. And owing to the pleasant and beautiful Light from the body of that Bodhisattva, [which] caused [sentient beings] to rejoice [and] led [them] to delight, as many as hundreds of thousands of world systems constantly came to be filled with brightness."

[The Light improves sentient beings]

"Vajramati, all sentient beings in the hundreds of thousands of world systems who were touched by the Light from that Bodhisattva within the womb of [his] Mother attained strength (ojas), beauty (varṇa), mindfulness (smṛti), comprehension (mati), understanding (gati) and readiness of speech (pratibhāna).

All sentient beings in the hundreds of thousands of world systems who had been born in hells, in animal existences, in the world of Yama and as demons (naraka-tiryag-yoni-yama-lokāsuropapatti) immediately [could] abandon (cyavate) their birth by virtue of being touched by the Light from that Bodhisattva, and were [re]born among gods and men.

Those [born as gods and men] by virtue of being touched [by the Light], immediately became incapable of turning back from supreme and perfect Awakening (Avaivartikā Anuttarāyāṃ Samyaksambodhau).

In addition, all those incapable of turning back who had been touched by the Light immediately, when touched by the Light, attained intellectual receptivity [to the Truth that] dharmas [have] no origination (anutpattika-dharmakṣānti). [They] also obtained the efficacious formulas (dhāraṇī) called 'Chapter of the Five Hundred Qualities.'"

[The Light makes the world systems delightful]

"All those hundreds of thousands of world systems which had been touched by the Light from the body of the Bodhisattva within the womb of [his] Mother came to be established as made of beryl, laid out in [the form of] a chessboard with golden threads, [with] jewel trees coming out of each square, [the trees] having blossoms, fruits, fragrances and colors.

When the jewel trees were shaken and moved by the wind, such pleasant [and] charming [sounds] came up as there are: the sound 'Buddha,' the sound 'Dharma,' the sound 'religious community' 'Sangha' [and] the sound 'Bodhisattva,' along with the sounds '[five] powers (bala) of a Bodhisattva,' '[five spiritual] faculties' (indriya), '[seven] branches of Awakening' (Bodhyaṅga), 'Liberation' (Vimokṣa), 'absorption' (Samādhi) and 'attainment' (Samāpatti).

Because of those sounds of the jewel trees, sentient beings in all of the hundreds of thousands of world systems became and remained satisfied and joyful. In all the Buddha-fields - the hells, animal existences, the world of Yama, and the world of the demons (asurakāya) disappeared.

The Bodhisattva within the womb of [his] Mother emitted light like the disk of the moon for all those sentient beings. Three times a day and three times a night [they] raised their joined palms [to pay homage] while [He] was still in the womb."

*[Why the Bodhisattva is named '*Sadāpramuktaraśmi']*

"Vajramati, when that Bodhisattva had been born, had set out for ascetic life (abhiniṣkramaṇa), and [finally] completely Awakened to Buddhahood (Bodhim Abhisaṃbuddha), Light continued to be emitted in such a way from the body of that Bodhisattva. Even after [his] complete Awakening, Light continued to be emitted from the body of that Exalted One. Even when the Exalted One entered into Parinirvāṇa, that Light [from] His body continued to be emitted in the same way. [And] even after that Tathāgata had entered Parinirvāṇa and [His body] remained [as] relics (dhātu) in a Stūpa, the light [from His] body [still] continued to be emitted. For this reason, Vajramati, that Exalted One is named the 'Always Light-Emitting One' (Sadāpramukta-raśmi) by gods and men."

[The Bodhisattva Anantaraśmi questions the Buddha Sadāpramukta-raśmi]

"Vajramati, under the rule (śāsana) of that Exalted One, the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and perfectly Awakened One, Sadāpramuktaraśmi—right after [he had become] completely Awakened —there appeared a certain Bodhisattva named Anantaraśmi.

[He was accompanied] by a retinue (parivāra) of a thousand [Bodhisattvas]. And, Vajramati, that Bodhisattva Anantaraśmi questioned the Exalted One, the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and perfectly Awakened One, Sadāpramuktaraśmi, with reference to this Dharma discourse [called] Tathāgatagarbha."

[Sadāpramuktaraśmi teaches the TGS]

“In order to benefit (anugraha) the Bodhisattvas and to win [them] over [to his side] (parigraha), the Exalted One, the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and perfectly Awakened One, *Sadāpramuktaraśmi thereupon perfectly explained this Dharma discourse [called] Tathāgatagarbha for five hundred great cosmic cycles, remaining in the same seat (ekāsane niṣannaḥ). And because He perfectly explained to the Bodhisattvas this Dharma discourse [called] Tathāgatagarbha in intelligible (vijñeya) words [and by employing] various means (abhi)nirhāra) [with regard to the] Dharma, explanations (nirukti) and hundreds of thousands of similes, [the Bodhisattvas] in all world systems in the ten directions, as many as the atomic-sized dust of ten Buddha-fields, understood [this Dharma] easily (alpakṛcchra).”

[Four Bodhisattvas do not attain Awakening]

“Vajramati, in this [connection] the roots of virtue (kuśalamūla) [of] all the Bodhisattvas who heard this Dharma discourse [called] Tathāgatagarbha, [or] even (antaśaḥ) only the title Tathāgatagarbha, successively (anupūrveṇa) came to maturity. Then, in such a way that the marvelous manifestation of the excellent qualities [of their Buddha-fields] conformed to their [roots of virtue, these Bodhisattvas] attained Supreme and Perfect Awakening—apart from four Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas.

Vajramati, if you think that then, at that time, the Bodhisattva Anantaraśmi was somebody other [than yourself, you] should not see it this way! Vajramati, you yourself were then, at that time, the Bodhisattva Anantaraśmi ! Who are the four Bodhisattvas who under the rule of that Exalted One have not attained Supreme and Perfect Awakening to Buddhahood up until today?

The four are the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Avalokiteśvara and you yourself, Vajramati!

Vajramati, this Dharma discourse [called] Tathāgatagarbha is thus of great benefit, since listening [to it leads] immediately to the Realization of Buddha-knowledge (Buddhajñāna) for Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas.”

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[11.1] “In the past, endless cosmic cycles ago, the exalted one Sadā]pramuktaraśmi appeared. From such Light being emitted from his body, myriads of Buddhafields came to be illuminated.”

[11.2] “At that time, right after [that] Victorious One had attained complete awakening, the Bodhisattva Anantaraśmi asked that Sugata, Victorious One and Master [for this discourse, and the latter then] perfectly [and] without pause explained this Sūtra.”

[11.3] “All those who happened to hear this Sūtra personally from the Leader, under the rule (śāsana) of that [same] Victorious One, quickly attained noble Awakening—apart from four Bodhisattvas:

[11.4] “Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Avalokiteśvara [and], third, the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. And you yourself, Vajramati, are the fourth! At that time they [all] heard this Sūtra.”

[11.5] “The Bodhisattva Anantaraśmi, who at that time had questioned the Victorious One [about the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra and who] had been tamed by that [same Victorious One]—[this] son of a Sugata, Vajramati, was at that time yourself!”

[11.6] “I, too, when [I] formerly practiced the path [of a Bodhisattva], happened to hear the title of this Sūtra from the Sugata Siṃhadhvaja. [And] having heard [it] with appreciation [I] raised my joined palms.”

[11.7] “By those well-done deeds I quickly attained Noble Awakening. Therefore wise Bodhisattvas should always learn this excellent sūtra !”

[Ānanda questions the Buddha about the length of time till perfection]

“Vajramati, [when] sons and daughters of good family who are restricted by obstacles [caused by their] deeds (karmāvaraṇa) listen to this Dharma discourse [called] Tathāgatagarbha, [and when they] show (uddiśati), recite (svādhyāyati) or teach [it, then]—with regard to listening to this Dharma discourse, showing [it], reciting [it], explaining [it] and copying [it]—they will all, seeing the Dharma before their eyes (pratyakṣa), easily (alpakṛcchra) become purified [from] the obstacles [caused by their] deeds.”

Then the venerable Ānanda asked the Exalted One the following:
“Exalted One, [as for] those sons and daughters of good family who are not restricted by obstacles [caused by their] deeds and [who] apply [themselves] (prayujyate) to this Dharma discourse, from how many Buddhas, Exalted Ones, [do they preserve] expositions of the Dharma as [persons of] great learning (bāhuśrutyena) so that [they] become perfected (niryāta)?”
The Exalted One said:
“Ānanda, there are sons and daughters of good family as well who are [already] perfected on account of having preserved expositions of the Dharma from a hundred Buddhas.”

[Perfection through preserving expositions of the Dharma from myriads of Buddhas]
“Ānanda, [but] there are also sons and daughters of good family who are [only] perfected on account of having preserved expositions of the Dharma from two hundred Buddhas, three hundred, four hundred, five hundred, one thousand, two thousand, three thousand, four thousand, five thousand, six thousand, seven thousand, eight thousand, nine thousand, ten thousand or a hundred thousand Buddhas, [or] even myriads of Buddhas.

Ānanda, a Bodhisattva who preserves this Dharma discourse, recites [it], perfectly teaches [it] in detail also to others and preserves [it] as a book should bring forth this thought: ‘I [wish to] attain Supreme and Perfect Awakening already now!’

He is worthy of the homage and veneration of the world with [its] gods, humans and demons (asura), as I [am] now."

[Homage to the one who holds the TGS in his hands]

Then at that time the Exalted One uttered these verses:

[12.1] "When a bodhisattva has heard this Sūtra, [he] thinks:
'I [wish to] attain the Noble Awakening!'

He in whose hands this Sūtra is found is worthy of the homage of the world, as I [am now]."

[12.2] "[Being himself] a protector of the world (lokanātha) [and] training [sentient beings], he is worthy of the praise (praśaṃsya) [of] the leaders (nāyaka) [and] trainers (vināyaka). Thus he in whose hands this Sūtra is found should be called 'King of the Dharma.'"

[12.3] "He in whose hands this Sūtra is found is worthy of being looked upon [as] the best of men (puruṣarṣabha), [as] bearer of the Lamp of the Dharma (Dharmolkādhārin) [and] like the full moon. Like a protector of the world, [he is] a foundation [worthy] of being paid homage."

[Delight and praise of the onlookers]

After the Exalted One had spoken thus, the Bodhisattva Vajramati, the entire multitude of Bodhisattvas, the great śrāvakas, the four assemblies and the world with [its] gods, humans, demons and celestial musicians were delighted, and praised [what] the Exalted One had said.

[Here] ends the Holy Mahāyāna Sūtra called Tathāgatagarbha.

Tibetan colophon:
The Indian master Śākyaprabha and the Venerable Great Reviser and Translator Yeshes sde have executed this translation and revised and established it definitively.

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OM MANI PADME HUNG HRIH

Reading and studying the instructions of the Buddha or to offer them to others is spiritual practice.

May the Buddhas delight in this gift and grant their blessings.

May the merit created by this action join the stream of merits of all the wholesome deeds performed by limitless beings in countless realms since beginningless time.

Thus, we dedicate this vast ocean of virtue and merits for the sake of the Enlightenment of all sentient beings.